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# GERMAN DESIGNS ON HOLLAND AND BELGIUM.

BY YVES GUYOT.

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## I.

WHEN I read in the summary of the November 16th issue of *THE NORTH AMERICAN REVIEW* the title of an article by Karl Blind on "A French War-Cry Against Germany," I was very far from imagining that it concerned me. I was, therefore, much surprised to learn that the writer had devoted it to the criticism of a "strange article from the pen of my friend Yves Guyot," and that the venerable Dr. Karl Blind considered the article in question to be "calculated to injure both the French Republic and the liberal and democratic cause in England."

Dr. Karl Blind next speaks of his "hearty interest in the French Republican cause." I am very grateful for this interest, but he neglects to enlighten the readers of the *REVIEW* on the nature of my article. My first care must be to repair this defect in his method of treating the question.

My article appeared in the "Nineteenth Century and After" last September, following up an article which had been published in the same magazine in July, written by Mr. Ellis Barker, who has just brought out a clever book on "The Rise and Decline of the Netherlands." My article sets forth an incontestable historical thesis: the political life of each nation depends on its geographical situation. When a nation desires to follow any policy other than that which is indicated by its geographical situation, it jeopardizes its security and courts ruin. In his book on "The Prussian Monarchy," which appeared in 1782, Mirabeau derided Peter the Great for his desire to endow Russia with a fleet; more than a century later events have proved the truth of his reflections.

Germany also has an unfortunate configuration as regards the

sea. True, she possesses an expanse of seashore covering 900 kilometres along the Baltic Sea, with three military ports—Koenigsberg, Dantzic and Kiel; but the Baltic is really a lake, often blocked by ice, and so inclosed that in order to insure communication between her great arsenal and the North Sea it has been necessary for Germany to construct the Kaiser Wilhelm Canal, which is 63 miles long and 30 feet deep. This canal, however, is so difficult of navigation for ironclads that before there could be any thought of using it for ships of the “Dreadnaught” type, alterations, estimated by the Director von Jonquières at 200 millions of marks, would have to be made in it.

On the North Sea, from Cuxhaven, at the mouth of the Elbe, to Emden, the coast, which is formed of low plains protected by banks, has—as the crow flies—a length of only about eighty miles. The two ports of Hamburg and Bremen are so situated that, in 1828, Bremen was obliged to complete its shipping facilities by building the harbor of Bremerhaven, and the large Hamburg boats only take their full loads at Cuxhaven. A heavy wind suffices to cause the waters of the Elbe below Hamburg to decrease one metre or more in depth. There is only one war port on that coast, Wilhemshaven, to which access is kept free only by constant dredging.

Certainly, the ports of Hamburg and Bremen have grown greatly since they were annexed to the Empire in 1889.

But the industrial movement in Germany tends more and more to the west, to Westphalia and the Rhenish province. The Rhine supplies a population of 16,000,000 inhabitants—that is, 28 per cent. of the population of the Empire. It runs through a region which contains 2,500,000 workmen—say, 27 per cent. of the entire working population of Germany. This region yields 50 per cent. of Germany’s total production of coal, 50 per cent. of its chemical products, 50 per cent. of its beer, 83 per cent. of its iron and 90 per cent. of its wine.

The Rhine is a magnificent river. From Carlsruhe to the mouth of the Main—a stretch of 387 miles—the difference in levels only amounts to 340 feet. In no part of the river is the width inferior to 218 yards; its depth from the sea to Cologne is ten feet, from Cologne to Mannheim, seven to eight feet.

But the mouth of this splendid river is in Holland; it flows into the sea at Rotterdam under the name of Maas. There, in the

middle of the river, large seagoing ships, lashed to "Ducs d'Albe," are surrounded by barges, which they load, and which are destined for the Rhine, with direct cargoes for Ruhrort, Cologne and Mannheim. In the mouths of the Scheldt, between Antwerp and the Rhine, can be everywhere found large pinnaces coming from the Rhine or going thither. Along the river one sees tugs drawing regular tows composed of boats, each representing from 500 to 600 tons, and aggregating a total figure of 4,500 tons. The freight between Ruhrort and Rotterdam is barely one centime per ton.

The twenty-two million marks voted in 1879 for the purpose of increasing the facilities for navigation on the Rhine were all spent in 1898; they certainly rendered good service to the populations living along the river; but they have largely contributed to the development of Rotterdam and of Antwerp.

The following is a comparative statement (in tons of 1,000 kilogs.) of the Rhenish navigation of Amsterdam, Rotterdam and Belgium from 1900 to 1904:

	Amsterdam.	Rotterdam.	Belgium.
1900.....	446,800	7,845,500	2,605,600
1901.....	435,800	7,735,300	2,757,300
1902.....	451,900	8,197,900	3,238,800
1903.....	436,700	10,328,300	3,786,500
1904.....	428,800	10,684,200	4,104,300

This increase in business has attracted a large German population to Antwerp and Rotterdam.

Such is the result of the geographical situation which makes of those two towns the two chief ports of the Rhine.

## II.

There is so little political premeditation in this infiltration of a German population into Belgium and Holland that the Emperor William has done everything in his power to divert a part of the traffic from the Rhine, and to direct it towards a German port, by the construction of the canal from Dortmund to Ems and the improvements made in the port of Emden. But neither of these efforts has given the desired result.

The canal was inaugurated on August 11th, 1899. It was expected that the first year would see a traffic of about 1,500,000 tons. The figure reached was not even 700,000 tons, in spite of a reduction in the toll rates. The canal had been conceived as "the

national outlet" of the Rhenish country; and, by a strange irony, while the Westphalian coal continued to follow the river route, 4,420 tons of English coal were transported by the canal. The port of Emden, which cost 22,000,000 marks, has an anchorage exceeding 35 feet, provided with all modern appliances and tools. But "the dredging-plant takes up more space there than the boats." Nevertheless, the Emperor has converted it into an obligatory station for certain trades which have nothing whatever to do there. In spite of all efforts, however, it has been impossible to obtain a tonnage exceeding 500,000 tons.

Purposely, Dortmund had not been connected with the Rhine so as to force merchandise and coal from that district to take the canal route. This precaution has proved useless; and it has finally been decided to include in the projects which have just been voted this year a canal from Dortmund to the Rhine, which shall cost twelve millions; but merchandise and coal will still be sent by the rapid, cheap and easy transit of the Rhine, instead of by a canal comprising twenty-seven locks and leading up to a town which is not a commercial centre. Universal experience goes to prove that commercial centres cannot be improvised.

The Emperor's future efforts to divert trade from Rotterdam and Antwerp towards Emden are, therefore, doomed to the same failure as befell the attempt to accomplish a like purpose through a reduction in tariffs, granted by a circular published on October 30th, 1884, which had for its object the protection of German ports against foreign ports. It was tried with the seagoing ships going up as far as Cologne; but in 1904 this item of navigation represented only 326,000 metric tons.

The greatest river in Germany, which represents more than a third of the tonnage of the internal navigation of Germany, which supplies her most industrial districts, has for ports two foreign towns. That is the fact which the Emperor of Germany finds unbearable, and many of his subjects agree with him. In order that the Rhine may have German towns as outlets, there is but one solution: the annexation of Holland, crowned by that of Antwerp.

### III.

That solution, which springs from the very nature of things, was I the one to invent it? On the contrary, Professor Treitschke declared in his book "*Politik*": "It is an imperative duty for

German politics to regain the mouth of the Rhine. The inclusion of Holland in the German Customs Union is as necessary as is daily bread." In July and August, 1901, after the opening of the Dortmund-Ems Canal, a series of articles appeared in the weekly semiofficial paper, "*Die Kreuzboten*." These articles were entitled "Holland and Germany," and they were attributed to the inspiration of Prince von Bülow. Their burden was this: "Holland is economically dependent upon Germany, and Holland's economic incorporation with Germany, in some form or other, is for Holland an unavoidable necessity. Politically, Holland is threatened by other nations. Her guaranteed neutrality is no more than a shred of paper. . . . Incorporation with Germany is her only salvation. Holland will do well to stand by us in friendship, not so much for our sake as for her own existence." The Germans tried then to make capital out of the South-African war by calling it "the fifth Anglo-Dutch war."

In Germany, Messrs. Stubmann, von Hale and Anton published several pamphlets to insist on the annexation of Holland to the Zollverein. In Holland, two papers, the "*Haagsche Courant*" and the "*Avondpost*," supported the idea, as also that of a postal union.

If Dr. Blind is not aware of these facts, that proves that he has not carefully followed the policy of his native country from England, where he has lived since his exile in 1852; and yet the Pan-German League, born on the morrow of the accession of Wilhelm II, and filled with high functionaries, dignitaries, professors, has made noise enough for some echoes to have been heard all over the world.

What can be the meaning of the repeated assertions of Wilhelm II that "the future of Germany is on the seas"? What means his passion for colonial enterprise? It is easy to discover the secret of this policy; it is the absorption of Holland, which would give to Germany a long stretch of free coast, would furnish an arsenal for her fleet in case of war, and would insure her possession of the Dutch Indies, with their extensive area, their population of 38,000,000 inhabitants, their rich products in coffee, sugar, spices, tobacco and so forth.

Political prevision is not a war-cry; it is, on the contrary, the best means of preventing war, for it may cause those who would not hesitate to put their designs into execution should they find no

resistance, to abandon such designs when they realize what is thought of them. The attention of Belgium and Holland is now drawn to the true situation. The official Belgian world, we must admit, has been greatly Germanicized for many years past. The King of the Belgians, owing to the Congo affairs, seeks support from the German Emperor; but the enthusiasm for things German is cooling down with the people. During the last two years certain writers have brought forward a plan of alliance between Belgium and Holland, and these writers—among them Mr. Eugene Baie, who wrote in the "*Petit Bleu*" of Brussels—have been well received in Holland.

It may be asked whether, from the point of view of International Law, a nation whose neutrality is guaranteed by the Powers can enter into treaty with another nation? Arendt, Ernst Nys, Descamps, Westlake reply in the affirmative. It cannot be a question of going back on the deeds accomplished in 1830; but Belgium and Holland can form a more intimate association, and grant support, one to the other, in such or such an event.

The event would be a war, and every nation that cares for her own preservation must recognize such a possibility, for its realization does not depend on her alone, it may depend on another nation or several other nations. There is for her only one means of restraining warlike ambitions; it is to be strong, and to follow a policy whose firmness cannot be questioned.

There are two great nations which cannot allow Germany to absorb Holland and Belgium: these are England and France—England, for the very reasons which made her take up the sword against Napoleon; France, because such an extension of the German Empire would reduce her to the rank of a third-class Power. No European nation could join in such a rupture of the present equilibrium, however unstable that equilibrium may be. The *entente cordiale* between France and England has for its political reason resistance to these very views and ambitions of Emperor Wilhelm. The agreement of these two nations is the guarantee of peace. The necessity of guarding the independence of Holland and of Belgium is the common interest which unites France and England, and which must gather round them all the civilized nations.

That is what I said, and in saying it, far from giving vent to a war-cry, I thought I was indicating a peril to be avoided and the conditions according to which it might be overcome.

Dr. Karl Blind reproaches me with not having practised the policy of the ostrich, which, with head under its wing, does not trouble itself about dangers it does not see, and he spends himself in recriminations on the past politics of France. We have nothing to do with that; we are speaking of the present. If he has no confidence in the "home policy of William II," I would ask him to allow me to feel no greater confidence in his foreign policy. Let him remember the Kaiser's discourse at Bremen on March 22nd, 1905, just before his departure for Tangier. It is not immediately after the Kaiser's menaces to France, his muddled attitude towards the conference of Algeciras, his counsel and his support of the Emperor of Morocco, his pretensions in seeking to subordinate the foreign policy of France to his own convenience, and even to tolerate at the Foreign Ministry at the Quai d'Orsay only ministers who should be agreeable to him—it is not in face of all these facts, I say, that Karl Blind can be justified in representing the Emperor William as an apostle of peace, and those who feel some distrust concerning his intentions as seekers of war.

Karl Blind has proved his friendship for me as the Emperor William proves his love for peace. He made, not only against me, but against France, in the past, the present and the future, an arraignment which proves that, if he was formerly exiled from Germany, he retains for his country a love which, like all true love, has a bandage over its eyes. But he has not shown that I was wrong in saying that the Emperor sees with sorrow that the two great ports on the Rhine are in Holland and in Belgium, that there are constant manifestations—dating back several years—in favor of the annexation of Holland and, at the very least, of Antwerp; that England and France must look such an event in the face, for they could not permit it. It would make the Emperor William Dictator over Europe.

YVES GUYOT.